

Air pollution in Europe has eased in the last decade, but remains the continent's biggest environmental health risk. Fine particulate pollution caused 379,000 premature deaths in the EU in 2018, according to the European Environment Agency. Brussels has set legal limits on particulate matter since 2005, resulting in a series of legal actions against countries flouting the rules.

The European Commission said it was suing Slovakia for years-long breaches of legal limits on air pollution and started legal action against Germany and Slovenia for falling short on nature conservation and water treatment. The commission took Slovakia to court for breaching EU particulate matter limits in every year from 2005-2019, except for 2016, in Banskobystricky kraj, a mountainous region in central Slovakia. The eastern city of Kosice breached the limits each year from 2005-2019, except for 2015 and 2016, the commission said. Slovakia's efforts to fix the problem have failed to reduce pollution in line with legal limits or minimise the length of breaches, it said. If found guilty, Slovakia would join a list of nine EU states that the bloc's top court has found guilty of illegal air pollution, including Romania, Italy and Sweden. Failure to heed the rules could see those countries face further legal action from the EU to impose financial penalties.

Particulate matter is produced by industry, vehicle emissions and home heating, as well as some agriculture, and is associated with cardiovascular diseases and lung cancer.

The commission also sued Germany for a "general and persistent" failure to produce sufficient conservation plans for more than 4,000 sites deemed important for protecting nature.

The EU executive also sued Slovenia for not properly treating waste water in four cities and towns before discharging it.

Source: nasdaq.com